

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 02947 130522Z

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R 121442Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3603

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2947

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OAU PFOR XA

SUBJECT: OAU CM: THE POLITICS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUE

REFS: (A) LAGOS 2090 AND 2091; (B) ADDIS 2251, 2855 AND 2811

1. THE EMBASSY OFFERS THE FOLLOWING TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH OAU SECRETARIAT PERSONNEL, AFRICAN AMBASSADORS AND DELEGATES TO THE RECENT CM ON THE LIKELY UNDERLYING POLITICS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUE AS IT DEVELOPED DURING THE RECENT ADDIS CM.

2. IT APPEARS TO US FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS THAT THE COLLAPSE
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 02947 130522Z

OF THE PORTUGUESE POSITION IN ITS AFRICAN TERRITORIES CONFRONTED

SERETSE KHAMA, KENNETH KAUNDA AND JULIUS NYERERE, AMONG OTHERS, WITH DANGEROUS UNCERTAINTIES REGARDING LIKELY RHODESIAN/SOUTH AFRICAN REACTIONS TO THIS EVENT. THESE UNCERTAINTIES, IN TURN, LED THEM INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH VORSTER, SMITH AND THE ANC. THESE DISCUSSIONS AND THE PROGRESS THEY SEEMED INITIALLY TO ACHIEVE HAD AS AN UNINTENDED SIDE EFFECT THE REVALIDATION OF THE CONCEPT OF "DIALOGUE" LONG ADVOCATED BY HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY AND OTHERS. IT THUS ENCOURAGED OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES SUCH AS TOLBERT'S AND, IN SHORT, GAVE RISE TO AN EFFERVESCENCE WHICH TROUBLED BOTH OAU MEMBER "TEAM PLAYERS" AND ARAB AFRICANS.

3. THE TEAM PLAYERS WERE CONCERNED LEST THE INTERESTS INHERENT IN THE PRESERVATION OF A RELATIVE COHESION IN AFRICAN POSITIONS ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES BE ENDANGERED. THEY LIKELY ALSO FEARED A SPILLOVER EFFECT OF SUCH "DISPERSION" INTO OTHER ARENAS SUCH AS THE AFRO-ARAB OR THE AFRO-EUROPEAN ONES. SOME ALSO WORRIED ABOUT OAU'S ABILITY TO KEEP A DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THE ACTIONS OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS CAPABLE OF AFFECTING THEIR OWN INTERESTS. SPECIFICALLY, WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF DIALOGUE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS ONCE OAU MEMBERS BEGAN TO TALK TO VORSTER OVER THEIR HEADS?

4. THE ARAB AFRICANS WERE TROUBLED BY THE THREATENED EROSION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL BARGAIN THAT CURRENTLY LIES AT THE BASE OF OAU POLITICS WHICH THEY HAVE WORKED TO THEIR ADVANTAGE; BLACK AFRICAN SUPPORT TO THE ARABS ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES IN RETURN FOR ARAB SUPPORT TO BLACK AFRICA ON CAPRICORN AFRICAN ISSUES. WITH BLACK AFRICA SEEMINGLY MAKING PROGRESS DIPLOMATICALLY ON RHODESIA (FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF THE PORTUGUESE POSITION IN AFRICA) AND VISIBLY PREPARING TO COME MORE CLOSELY TO GRIPS WITH THE NAMIBIAN QUESTION, THEY MIGHT SOON COME TO FEEL LESS DEPENDENT UPON ARAB SUPPORT AND BECOME LESS RESPONSIVE TO ARAB INFLUENCE. WORSE, UNDER THE IMPETUS OF CONTINUING OIL IMPORT DEFICITS AND THE INADEQUACY OF ARAB HELP TO COMPENSATE THEREFOR, BLACK AFRICANS MIGHT SOON BEGIN TO CONSTRAIN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE ARABS IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONTEXT. SOME MIGHT EVEN MOVE TO RESTORE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. WE SUSPECT THAT BOUTEGLIKA'S STRONG INTERVENTION CASTIGATING THESE UNILATERAL BLACK AFRICAN INITIATIVES VIS-A-VIS THE RACIST REGIMES REFLECTED THESE CONCERNS.

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 02947 130522Z

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